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Correspondence.

ON SAINTS' DAYS, PURGATORY, PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD, ETC.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Since you have put yourself forward as the inquisitor of Catholic doctrines, it might reasonably be expected that you would give conclusive evidence on all those points which you have undertaken to discuss; and particularly so with regard to the doctrine of purgatory. But waiving this consideration, let me admit, for the sake of argument, that my citations from Origen are heretical; then the absurd conclusion follows, that the Saints Basil, Cyril, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, with many other lights of the fourth century, are alike involved in the same heresy; for many of these Fathers explain (1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, &c.) in same manner as Origen, and nearly in the same words, whilst all of them invariably adopt the principle which it enunciates.

These latter evidences, you object, are not within the proposed limitation; admitting so, I consider it perfectly within the limits of reason to maintain that these *holy* men, whose eulogy needs not a repetition, could not, nor did not, adopt, at second hand, the opinion of a heretic, and palm it on the Church of God as a portion of the religion of Jesus Christ, as they all unanimously declare the doctrine of purgatory to be.

You admit that the silence of Scripture is the most powerful argument with Protestants against the doctrine of purgatory; with respect to the doctrine of the Protestant Church in the practice of praying for the dead, and which you maintain is the same as that of the early church, the Scripture is as silent as the grave; upon what authority, then, does the Protestant Church hold this point of doctrine?

I next find in the *Book of Common Prayer*, that the Church of England has appointed holidays for a great number of particular saints, with a distinct *service* for each day; a holiday also, for St. Michael and all the angels, and another for all the saints. What warrant of Scripture have you for all these? Did the synagogue order holidays in honour of Moses, the Patriarchs, or any of the Prophets? Did St. John the Evangelist, the survivor of all his fellow Apostles and Evangelists, order a day to be celebrated with holy solemnity in honour of any of them? On all these points the Scripture is equally silent as on the doctrine of purgatory, and hence you see the necessity to expunge from the calendar all these holidays, and not allow them to remain any longer in the very threshold of the Liturgy, at variance with the essential principles of rigid Protestant theology; also, to abolish the practice of praying for the dead, or at once admit that the Church of England retains doctrines for which she has no Scripture authority.

I have already stated that prayers were offered by the early Church in plain and direct words, *for* all who died in the Catholic communion, but I contend, on the authority of St. Epiphanius, that the intention of the Church in these prayers varied according to the relative character of the parties for whom they were offered, and until the two words *thanksgivings* and *propitiations* can merge into one common acceptation, the passage which I cited from St. Epiphanius will bear out this distinction. St. Cyprian declares (*in fine Lib. de Mortalitate*) that the saints in heaven pray most anxiously for our salvation. I ask would this holy Father pray for these saints indiscriminately with the other dead? The Bishop of Oxford, in his edition of St. Cyprian, page 271, has these remarkable words—"We doubt not but the saints in heaven pray earnestly to God, that he may have mercy on those struggling on earth." Our Saviour says to his disciples (John xiv. 2, 3,) "I go to prepare a place for you—that where I am, there you may be also;" the primitive Church knew this Scripture, and therefore can hardly be contemplated as praying to God to have mercy on the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin, &c., to grant them pardon of their sins—to grant them mercy, relief, comfort, &c., in common with the other dead.

I now respectfully submit that the passages in St. Epiphanius, connected with the heresy of Aerius, besides the practice of praying for the dead, establish two other very important facts elucidatory of the object of these prayers. First, that the Church in the time of St. Epiphanius believed that some sins were forgiven in the world to come; secondly, that the prayers which the Church offered for the dead, and the alms given to the poor, were believed, to some extent, efficacious in obtaining this forgiveness. The words of Aerius afford the most satisfactory evidence, that these three points are conjointly the object of his attack, which could not be the case if they were not then the doctrine and practice of the Church.

This dogmatizer asks, "why are the dead prayed for?" (Epiph. Hor. 75, sec. 3. Tom 1. page 908,) and had he stopped here, and made no allusion, as he subsequently does, to the object of these prayers, there might be some reason to deny that these prayers were *then* offered in the same sense in which the Catholic Church *now* prays for the dead; but again he asks (not inquiringly, but ridiculing the doctrine which he attempts to impugn)—"If the living pray for the dead, and give alms to the poor, what helps can arise to the dead from these things?" (*ibidem*) thus cavilling at the belief of the Church, that some sins were remitted after death, and that prayers, alms, &c., helped to obtain this remission. That this is obviously his meaning, is, moreover, fully confirmed by the frivolous objection which he next makes; for had he not understood the doctrine of the Church on this point to be what I stated above, regarding the object of prayers for the dead, he could not have opposed to it the following objection:—"for," says he, "if the prayers of the living can obtain pardon of sins for those who are departed out of this life, no one will live piously here, nor do any good action, but he will engage some friends, either by entreaties, or by bestowing large sums of money on them, who may pray for him after death, that his wicked deeds might not be punished in the next world" (*Ibid*).

Here, then, we have attested and confirmed by the arguments of Aerius, that the Catholic Church in his day believed that some sins were forgiven after death, and that the prayers of the living and alms were powerful auxiliaries in effecting this forgiveness; or, we have here established the essential doctrine of Purgatory; and this being an indisputable fact, I shall readily forego all controversy respecting the name. The reply of St. Epiphanius is equally explicit in proof of this doctrine. He says, "We mention in our prayers the names of sinners who are dead, that we may supplicate God for mercy of them" (Epiph. Hor. 75. Sec. 3. T. 1. page 911.); no mercy extends to the damned (Mark ix. 44); no sin enters heaven (Rev. xxi. 27). And, again, he says, "These prayers which are offered for the dead afford them help, though they may not blot out all their sins" (*Ibid*, Sec. 7. page 911.) Let sophistry show, if possible, that the saint does not teach here, that some sins may be cancelled by these prayers. Lastly, he tells Aerius that the Church has this doctrine traditionally from Christ (Sec. 8. page 912); not "*from ghost stories*," as you insinuate, and thus he intimates to him that this doctrine which maintains that the prayers of the living can obtain pardon of sins for the dead, and which he attempts to deny, forms a part of that supernatural system propounded by our Saviour to his Apostles, and that it is presumptuous in him, a *blind beetle*, so he calls him, to find fault with it. Hence, it appears, that whilst discussing prayers for the dead, we are virtually discussing the doctrine of Purgatory. And the *Translators of Du Pin*. (Cent. 7. page 3.) assures us "that prayers were offered in the Church for the relief of the souls of the faithful departed, about two hundred years after Christ; and that these prayers of the first Christians were very warrantable and pious." *They* might have assigned these prayers a much earlier existence, for the authorities whom they cite all refer the origin of this practice either to Christ or to the Apostles; and I have shown that, in the fourth century, the doctrince of the Church respecting the object of these prayers was identically the same as the doctrine of Purgatory in the Catholic Church of the present day.

I have, again, to apologize for the length to which these observations have extended, and presuming on your usual courtesy,

I remain, Sir, yours, &c. &c. &c.

EDMOND POWER.

We must object to our correspondents filling our columns with mere assertions, without proofs. In future, our rule must be to decline inserting anything for which some proof is not offered.

Mr. Power here asserts that a long list of Fathers, whom he names, agreed with Origen about Purgatory. He gives no proof, but his own assertion, and we explicitly deny the fact. Origen believed that all who are turned into hell, men and devils alike, will finally be saved by the Purgatorial efficacy of hell fire. This was Origen's notion of Purgatory; every proof brought from him for Purgatory means this and nothing else, and this is the only Purgatory that Mr. Power can show from the Fathers of the first three hundred years.

It is wholly untrue and unwarrantable to say that the Fathers whom Mr. Power mentions, gave any countenance to this heretical doctrine.

Mr. Power also asserts of the Fathers he mentions, that "they all unanimously declare the doctrine of Purgatory to be 'a portion of the religion of Jesus Christ.'" This is mere assertion, of which Mr. Power gives no proof whatever. We call on him to give the passages from each of the Fathers he has named, in which they make this declaration. Until he do this, we are at liberty to deny his assertion.

Some of them spoke of it as a mere matter of speculation—as a thing that might be, or might not be. Is this the way they spoke of the religion of Jesus Christ?

Mr. Power is entirely mistaken in supposing that services on particular days, in commemoration of the apostles of Christ, are "at variance with the essential principles of rigid Protestant theology." He confounds things that are totally different in their own nature. We will explain this once for all. The sixth article of the Church of England and Ireland, says—"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith." Article 20 says—"The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies." Article 34—"Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be *not repugnant* to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly.....Every particular or national Church hath authority *to ordain*, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying." Is it not clear that according to this "essential principle of Protestant theology," direct authority and proof from Scripture is required only for "articles of the faith," and not for rites and ceremonies? and how, then, is it inconsistent with this theology, to follow it exactly as we do? And yet we have direct authority to commemorate the apostles, in Heb. xiii. 7.

Prayers for the dead we have never countenanced nor vindicated farther than as they may rely on the promise and the Word of God; and as long as we do not go beyond this, how can we be taunted with admitting prayers for the dead not warranted by Scripture? God has promised to keep the souls of the faithful departed; he has promised to raise their bodies hereafter, and to make both soul and body glorious with himself. When we pray, "thy kingdom come," we pray not for ourselves alone, but for the consummation of bliss to all that shall inherit that kingdom. We hold to this principle, that acceptable prayer must be founded on the promises of God; that it is a calling upon God to perform his word; and this can never lead to prayer not warranted by Scripture. We believe that the most ancient prayers for the dead did not go beyond this, and that modern prayers for the dead do violate it gressly. That the early Church prayed for all alike who departed in the faith—apostles, martyrs, prophets—is conclusive that it was not intended as prayer to deliver out of Purgatory, but as calling upon God to perform what is yet to be fulfilled of his word. Mr. Power asks would St. Cyprian and the primitive Church pray for those Saints in heaven who now pray for us, "indiscriminately with the other dead?" We answer, "certainly not, if these prayers were prayers for getting souls out of Purgatory." But the *fact is*, that the early Church did pray for the saints in Heaven, in the same prayers and in the same words in which she prayed for all those departed in the faith; and, hence, we conclude that they were *not* prayers for getting souls out of Purgatory, but, simply, prayers to God, to fulfil his word and promises to them. *Is there any promise from God to take souls out of Purgatory?* Let Mr Power only show us such a promise, and then we will join in such prayers.

Mr. Power's argument from Aerius and Epiphanius is more deserving of attention, as being accompanied with proofs and references. We have not space to enter on it in this number, but will give due attention to it in our next. But this belongs to the fourth century: no proof has yet been produced for Purgatory from the first 300 years of the Church. That at least may now be considered as settled.

ADORING IMAGES—THE MOTHER OF GOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Stauracius, Bishop of Chalcedon, is reported to have said, "εικονας ὡς αρραβωνα της σωτηριας μου ουσας," *i.e.*, the *images* which I hold to be pledges of my salvation: and Gregory of Sinope, "σεβομενος ϰ̀ τροσκυνων," *i.e.*, venerating and worshipping; can you name the writings in which the expressions may be found? It is remarkable that "venerating and worshipping" were the words used for that worship of the Emperor's statue, which the first Christians died rather than offer.

Not being a Greek scholar, I shall be obliged if you will inform me if the title of *Theotokos*, bestowed on the mother of Jesus, admits of any other meaning besides the generally understood one of *Mother of God*.

Yours, &c.,

WILLIAM BLOOD.

Wicklow, August 2, 1853.

Stauracius, Bishop of Chalcedon, was present at the Second Council of Nice, held in the year 787, which Council first sanctioned the adoring of images. Stauracius adopts the words from a letter which he says was written by Pope Adrian to Tarasius.—Labbe and Cossart, Concilia Generalia, vol. vii., p. 705.

Gregory of Synope was present in the same Council, and also used the words attributed to him.—Labbe and Coss., vol. vii., p. 709.

We are happy to answer the questions of correspondents when we can; but, when a correspondent gives us no reference nor clue whatever, it is very like looking for a needle in a bundle of straw. By the way, there is a great deal of straw in that Council, and chaff too—near a thousand folio columns. For several hundred years it was rejected by the Western Church as erroneous, and other Councils were held to condemn it, though now it is counted a General Council and infallible, by the Church of Rome. We shall probably have occasion to discuss the merits of this Council on some other occasion.

Θεοτοκος (Theotokos) is *not* the word that would have been used by persons who spoke the Greek language to express what the Church of Rome now means by "Mother of God." The origin and intention of the term θεοτοκος is well known. Nestorius taught that the Son of God and the son of Mary were two different persons. This was a heresy that struck at the root of our redemption by Christ; because, according to this notion, it was the son of Mary only, a mere man, who died upon the cross; and, therefore, the